



PRESS RELEASE

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Georgia Postal Employee Indicted For His Role in a Stolen Identity Refund Fraud Scheme

A federal grand jury sitting in Macon, Georgia returned an indictment against a resident of Columbus, Georgia on Nov. 9, which was unsealed today, for his role in a stolen identity refund fraud conspiracy, announced Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Caroline D. Ciraolo, head of the Justice Department's Tax Division, and U.S. Attorney G.F. Peterman III for the Middle District of Georgia.

According to the indictment, Harold Coley worked as a mail carrier for the U.S. Postal Service and his postal route was in Columbus, Georgia. In 2012, Coley became involved in a stolen identity tax refund conspiracy. Coley's co-conspirators, including Keshia Lanier, obtained stolen personal identification information from several sources, including from an Alabama state database and then prepared and filed false federal income tax returns for tax years 2011 and 2012. Coley provided his co-conspirators with addresses on his postal route to which the fraudulently obtained tax refund checks could be mailed. Several of these addresses did not exist or were for vacant homes. Coley was paid a fee to divert and provide these checks to his co-conspirators.

If convicted, Coley faces a statutory maximum sentence of 10 years in prison for the conspiracy count, 20 years in prison for each mail fraud count, five years in prison for each theft of mail count, and a mandatory minimum sentence of two years in prison for aggravated identity theft. In addition to the charges, Coley faces a forfeiture claim of approximately \$924,000, a period of supervised release, and monetary penalties.

An indictment merely alleges that crimes have been committed. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Ciraolo and U.S. Attorney Peterman commended special agents of Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation, the U.S. Secret Service, and the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General, who conducted the investigation, and Trial Attorney Michael C. Boteler of the Tax Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney Crawford L. Seals of the Middle District of Georgia, who are prosecuting the case.

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